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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 12 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and, with reference to its note dated 18 February 2009 pertaining to Djibouti's candidature to the Human Rights Council, has the honour to transmit, enclosed herewith, an aide-memoire containing Djibouti's voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with resolution 60/251 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session the assurances of its highest consideration.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 12 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: French]

Candidature of Djibouti for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2009-2012

1. The Republic of Djibouti had already demonstrated its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights by ratifying or acceding to the following international and regional agreements:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1990;
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in 2002;
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 1999;
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the two Optional Protocols thereto, in 2002;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2002;
- The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol;
- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

2. Djibouti has acceded in line with its voluntary commitments when it first presented its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council in 2006, to the following three instruments:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

3. National level:

- In 2007 Djibouti also enacted a law on human trafficking;
- Djibouti has made the prevention of female genital mutilation and the protection of the rights of children two of its top priorities;
- Djibouti was elected as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Human Rights Council in 2007-2008, and played a very active role in the strengthening of the Council and in the first two sessions of the universal periodic review (UPR).

The post of Vice-President helped to bolster Djibouti's efforts with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level and encouraged several national and international stakeholders to redouble their efforts in that area.

The initiatives undertaken over the past two years in that area attest to Djibouti's political commitment at the highest level to human rights. Two of the most noteworthy initiatives were the establishment of a national human rights commission in April 2008 and of an inter-ministerial committee in September 2008 to coordinate the drafting and submission of reports to treaty bodies.

Various awareness-raising activities and events to promote human rights were held in Djibouti to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The highlight was a large gathering chaired by the Prime Minister, and attended by representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations agencies.

These institutions were immediately approached to provide assistance in connection with the preparation of Djibouti's report to the universal periodic review — a key event for the country. The Republic of Djibouti's report presented to the fourth session of the universal periodic review working group on 2 February 2009 was drafted by the inter-ministerial committee.

Desiring to build on the positive response from the universal periodic review and seeing that exercise as an opportunity to identify priorities in the area of human rights needs, the Republic of Djibouti organized on 17 and 18 February 2009 a briefing workshop on the review's recommendations and on the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The workshop culminated in the signing of an agreement concerning a joint two-year technical support programme between the Ministry of Justice and Corrections, and the National Human Rights Commission on the one hand, and OHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund on the other.

This support programme is in line with the capacity-building policies for national stakeholders undertaken by the Government and aims specifically at permitting the Government to meet its treaty body obligations; bringing the functioning of the National Human Rights Commission in line with international standards, in strengthening the role of civil society in the promotion of human rights; and enhancing the performance of law enforcement officials.

Moreover, pursuant to a host of recommendations made in the context of the universal periodic review, Djibouti has endeavoured to establish closer ties with OHCHR; it has requested technical support in various areas, including with respect to the holding of training seminars on techniques for drafting reports for treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council, which has led to the development of the ambitious two-year joint technical support programme mentioned above. Pursuant to the recommendations of the universal periodic review technical support has been requested from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to send a human rights needs evaluation mission.

4. Regional level:

Djibouti has honoured the voluntary commitment it made when it presented its initial candidature for election to the Human Rights Council, in regard to its role in

the settlement and mediation of regional conflicts. Djibouti has played a key role in the context of the conflict in Somalia, hosting negotiations among the various parties and facilitating elections that led to the election of a new President.

5. For all the foregoing reasons, the Republic of Djibouti pledges to continue to place human rights at the heart of its national concerns and to spare no effort to promote and protect human rights at both the regional and international levels.

6. If re-elected to the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Djibouti pledges to continue to support the work of the United Nations human rights protection mechanisms, foremost among them, the Human Rights Council. In particular, it pledges to:

- Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Strengthen its cooperation with various United Nations human rights protection mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, by submitting its various initial and periodic reports;
- Strengthen cooperation with the Human Rights Council mechanisms;
- Review the Act on the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission to bring it more in line with the Paris Principles.